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SUBJECT: ISCI PALYING FOR TIME AS DEADLINE APPROACHES FOR NEW
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

REF: HILLAH 0017

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth Hillas, PRT Leader, Babil PRT, Dept of
State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Governor Salim Saleh Al-Muslimawi (ISCI) is expected to delay convening of the new Provincial Council (PC) as long as possible, using this time to try to pry away individual members of the Da'wa-led coalition and deny it a majority, according to Abu Ahmed Al-Basri, Babil Da'wa party leader and incoming PC member. The old PC has not met for a month and the Governor has abdicated his normal administrative responsibilities during this time, creating a sense of drift. The Governor is required to convene the new and old council members together by April 10.

¶2. (C) Abu Ahmed told us that The State of Law slate had concluded its coalition partnership agreement on March 30 with Ahrar (Sadrists), The Iraqi Commission for NGOs (Iskander Witwit's slate) and Dr. Al-Ja'fari's National Reform Trend. There are 17 votes in the coalition out of a total of 30 Council seats. The agreement stipulates that State of Law will choose the governor and the PC chair's deputy and assistants. The Sadrists will choose the PC chair (possibly Kadum Majid Tooman), Witwit (a former Governor) will be Deputy Governor, and the National Reform Trend will pick the second deputy governor. Da'wa interprets the agreement as allowing them to pick an independent outside the ranks of the newly-elected PC members for the governor's position. This is reportedly the Prime Minister's (PM) preference, according to Abu Ahmed, who made clear that PM Mailiki is having a strong role in choosing the next governor.

¶3. (C) Abu Ahmed told us they expect to name the new governor within five days of the first meeting of the new council. He also told us that State of Law offered ISCI the opportunity to participate in negotiations in forming a new provincial government but it refused. Hassan Kamoona, head of the provincial Badr Organization and new PC member, claims ISCI has a 15- seat bloc (half the PC), comprised of ISCI, ISCI-affiliated slates and Allawi's Iraqi National List which was formerly believed in coalition with the Rule of Law slate (reftel). If this were accurate it would deny the State of Law's coalition the needed votes to choose the governor and others. Da'wa has refuted these claims, and a senior Da'wa official told us that Governor Al-Muslimawi continues to hold onto the wish that he can remain in office somehow. That appears very unlikely, but Da'wa's majority depends on several small parties and individual PC members may be subject to ISCI pressures or other means of persuasion.

HILLAS